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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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~ HS Suggestion: Dump IE ~ People Are Talking! ~ Fixing The IE Flaw!
~ AOL: Change Passwords! ~ New, Revamped Firefox! ~ Watch Out, Yahoo!
~ When BASIC Was Young! ~ Google To Stop Mining! ~ The New MacBook Air!

~ Google Hit With Lawsuit ~ Warhol Work Disk-overy ~ Gov’t Data Requests!

-* Searchers Unearth Grave of ET *-
-* Is The FCC Letting Net Neutrality Die? *-
-* Proposals Far from Gutting Net Neutrality! *-

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->From the Editor’s Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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I apologize for the lateness with this week’s issue. Lots of work, lots of necessary time to put it together, but little time to get ahead of the game!

Speaking of games, the Atari E.T. game urban legend has proven to be true! This past weekend, E.T. and more, was dug up in a New Mexico landfill. All the rumors have finally been laid to rest. We have the story in this issue!

Until next time...

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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare Trailer Released
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EA, Comcast Close To Signing Streaming Game Deal

Diggers Find Atari’s E.T. Games in Landfill
And more!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare Trailer Officially Released

Following leaks earlier, Activision officially released the full trailer for their next Call of Duty game.

The trailer, which was meant to debut on May 4 with details about this year’s Call of Duty game, has come out well ahead of its intended date. The next Call of Duty will officially be titled Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare and has a scheduled release date of November 4 this year.

Kevin Spacey will play a prominent role in the game. And Advanced Warfare also features hoverbikes and exosuits with enhanced jumping abilities.

EA, Comcast Close To Signing Streaming Game Deal

Are games coming to Comcast’s X1 service?

According to a report from Reuters, Electronic Arts and Comcast are close to finalizing a deal that would bring EA-published games to Comcast’s X1 TV operating system through cloud-powered streaming. Five separate sources told Reuters that this was the case.

According to Reuters, Comcast and EA have tested such a streaming service for more than two years. Games from the Madden, FIFA, Monopoly, and Plants vs. Zombies franchises were called out as those being available for streaming. The report goes on to say that you’ll be able to use a tablet you already own as a controller to play the games, suggesting the games on offer will be smaller, mobile games rather than bigger, console-level titles. The list of available games is reportedly still being hashed out.

Sources told Reuters that Comcast will focus on casual and family games first, before later considering FPS and action games. It will all come down to user preference, the report says.

Comcast has more than 22 million customers in the United States, which would (potentially) make the company a major player in the home gaming space if the deal goes through. An EA representative declined to comment when approached by GameSpot, while we’ve yet to hear back from a Comcast representative about this reported deal.

Sources told Reuters that EA and Comcast want to make buying games as easy as ordering a pay-per-view movie. "This could create a new distribution model that circumvents console and video-streaming device makers," Reuters points out.

Both EA and Comcast were featured in this year’s Worst Company In America poll from consumer affairs blog The Consumerist. After "winning" two years running, EA was knocked out in the first round this year, while Comcast "won" it all, taking home the Golden Poo award.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Documentary Crew Solves Mystery Around Worst Video Game Ever Made

Documentary filmmakers digging in a New Mexico landfill on Saturday

unearthed hundreds of E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial cartridges, considered by some the worst video game ever made and blamed for contributing to the downfall of the video game industry in the 1980s.

Some gamers had speculated that thousands or even millions of the unwanted cartridges made by Atari were buried in a landfill in Alamogordo, about 200 miles southeast of Albuquerque.

Who dumped the videos, how many they buried, and why they did it inspired the dig and a documentary of the event by Microsoft s Xbox Entertainment Studios.

The first batch of E.T. games was discovered under layers of trash after about three hours of digging, a Microsoft spokeswoman said, putting to rest questions about whether the cartridges would be found at all.

She could not immediately provide an exact count of how many cartridges were uncovered.

The game was a design and marketing failure after it was rushed out to coincide with the release of Steven Spielberg s 1982 hit movie, E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial, and it contributed to a collapse of the video game industry in its early years.

Atari is believed to have been saddled with most of the 5 million E.T. game cartridges produced. According to New York Times reports at the time, the manufacturer buried the games in the New Mexico desert in the middle of the night.

A game enthusiast later tracked down the suspected burial site and spread the word about the location, said Sam Claiborn, an editor at video game news site IGN.

The approximate size of the dig site at an old Alamogordo landfill measures 150 feet by 150 feet off the city s main commercial street.

 For a lot of people, it s something that they ve wondered about and it s been rumored and talked about for 30 years, and they just want an answer, said Zak Penn, the film s director.

When the game was first released in 1982 it retailed for around $29.99, but now often sells on eBay for less than $5.

 I don t know how much people would pay for a broken E.T. game, but as a piece of history, it has a much different value, Penn said.

Searchers Unearth Grave of "E.T.," The Video Game Atari Wanted Us To Forget

"E.T." may have soared in the movies. But as a video game, it was an epic turkey.

When electronics pioneer Atari rushed a game based on the 1982 Hollywood blockbuster to market for its then-dominant home consoles, it was a flop, compounded by the fact that the infant industry was hitting its first slump at the time.

So Atari literally buried the project, dumping truckloads of unsold games

in a desert landfill in New Mexico. And amid a decade of entertainment-industry disasters bookended by the movie "Heaven's Gate" and Milli Vanilli, the "E.T." game quickly faded into urban legend.

"Riiiight," you say.

No, really. And over the weekend, with a couple of hundred onlookers watching, excavators led by a documentary film crew began to unearth stacks of 30-year-old Atari cartridges from a landfill outside Alamogordo.

"Urban legend CONFIRMED," Larry Hryb, one of the creators of Microsoft's Xbox gaming platform, reported via Twitter from the dig site. Microsoft's Xbox Entertainment Studios is one of the backers of the planned documentary, tentatively titled "Atari: Game Over." Hryb also tweeted a photo of the first cartridge to be dug out.

Not so fast, Atari historian Curt Vendel said Monday. "E.T." cartridges were just one of more than 20 titles found over the weekend, and may not make up more than a fifth of the estimated 700,000-plus units the ailing Atari discarded in 1983, he said. As far as he's concerned, the great "E.T." caper remains "a myth."

"This was a write-off dump," said Vendel, the co-author of a 2012 book on the company. Atari was being hit from all sides by a saturated market for arcade games, competition from other companies making games for its famous 2600 console and by a large volume of returns from retailers - a problem it had never before faced and wasn't prepared to handle.

"Poor sales, the video game crash, 'E.T.'s' not a great game - the whole thing kind of snowballs together, and then you find Atari is dumping cartridges in the desert," he said. "That's how this whole myth kind of self-generated."

One of those on hand at the landfill Saturday was Howard Scott Warshaw, the game's designer. When excavators started to retrieve the first of what may be hundreds of thousands of copies of his misbegotten baby, "Everybody went nuts," Warshaw said.

"I've been carrying this thing, the theoretically worst video game of all time, for 30 years now," he said. "It was a game that was done in five weeks. It was a very brief development. I did the best that I could, and that's OK."

But seeing the cartridges emerge from the desert dust was a rush for Warshaw, who's now a Silicon Valley psychotherapist.

"Something that I did 32 years ago is still creating joy and excitement for people," he said. "That's a tremendously satisfying thing for me now."

Today's Atari, which still sells games but no longer makes its own platforms, did not respond to a request for comment Sunday. The original company folded in 1984, and several successive companies have bought the name, Vendel said.

"E.T" was rushed to stores in time for Christmas 1982, hobbled not only by its short development time but by a license and royalty agreement that promised the film's director, Steven Spielberg, $21 million, Vendel said. The company needed to sell out of the 5 million units it produced to

break even; it sold about 3.5 million by the following fall, he said.

By that time, Atari was collapsing. About the time "E.T." hit the shelves, a poor and badly delayed earnings report spooked investors, "and everybody started running to go sell," Vendel said. At its peak, it employed about 11,000 people; it was shedding employees by the thousands in 1983, and had only about 900 left by the time it closed down.

"They were just cutting the meat off the bone," he said.

And so in 1983, the company dumped 14 truckloads of merchandise from its service center in El Paso, Texas, in the Alamogordo landfill, about 90 miles away, Vendel said. To keep scavengers from reselling them, the cartridges were covered by a layer of concrete.

None of the "E.T." cartridges unearthed over the weekend was playable, Warshaw said. But he said there may be as many as 750,000 of them in the landfill, with many successful titles mixed in with the "E.T." games.

"It was the end of the first product life cycle, and nobody really knew what they were doing," Warshaw said. Now, manufacturers are designing their next systems even as their new ones start shipping to stores.

"It was a very wacky company, but that’s one of the things that made it amazing place to work," said Warshaw, who’s come to embrace the game’s infamy.

"I don’t really believe it’s one of the worst games ever, but I really like it when people identify it that way," Warshaw told CNN. And because he also designed of one of Atari’s best-rated games, "Yars’ Revenge," he said, "I have the greatest range of any game designer in history."

Diggers Find Atari’s E.T. Games in Landfill

A decades-old urban legend was put to rest Saturday when workers for a documentary film production company recovered "E.T." Atari game cartridges from a heap of garbage buried deep in the New Mexico desert.

The "Atari grave" was, until that moment, a highly debated tale among gaming enthusiasts and other self-described geeks for 30 years. The story claimed that in its death throes, the video game company sent about a dozen truckloads of cartridges of what many call the worst video game ever to be forever hidden in a concrete-covered landfill in southeastern New Mexico.

The search for the cartridges of a game that contributed to the demise of Atari will be featured in an upcoming documentary about the biggest video game company of the early ’80s.

As a backhoe scattered a huge scoop of 30-year-old trash and dirt over the sand, the film crew spotted boxes and booklets carrying the Atari logo.

Soon after, a game cartridge turned up, then another and another.

Film director Zak Penn showed assembled gaming fans one cartridge retrieved from the site and said that hundreds more were in the

surrounding mounds of garbage.

About 200 residents and game enthusiasts gathered early Saturday at the old landfill in Alamogordo to watch crews search for up to a million discarded copies of "E.T. The Extraterrestrial" that the game’s maker wanted to hide forever.

"I feel pretty relieved and psyched that they actually got to see something," Penn said as members of the production team sifted through the mounds of trash, pulling out boxes, games and other Atari products.

Most of the crowd left the landfill before the discovery, turned away by strong winds that kicked up massive clouds of dust mingled with garbage.

By the time the games were found, only a few dozen people remained. Some were playing the infamous game in a makeshift gaming den with a TV and an 1980s game console in the back of a van, while others took selfies beside a life-size E.T. doll inside a DeLorean car like the one that was turned into a time machine in the "Back To The Future" movies.

Among the watchers was Armando Ortega, a city official who as a teenager back in 1983 got a tip from a landfill employee about the massive dump of games.

"It was pitch dark here that night, but we came with our flashlights and found dozens of games," he said. They braved the darkness, coyotes and snakes of the desert landfill and had to sneak past the security guard. But it paid off as they found dozens of crushed but still playable cartridges.

The game’s finding came as no surprise to James Heller, a former Atari manager who was invited by the production to the dig site. He says in 1983 the company tasked him with finding an inexpensive way to dispose of 728,000 cartridges they had in a warehouse in El Paso, Texas. After a few local kids ran into trouble for scavenging and the media started calling him about it, he decided to pour a layer of concrete over the games.

"I never heard about again it until June 2013, when I read an article about E.T. being excavated," he remembers. He was not aware of the controversy and never spoke out "because nobody asked."

The documentary about the search is being developed by companies including Xbox Entertainment Studios, and the film is expected to be released later this year on Microsoft’s Xbox game consoles.

The city of Alamogordo agreed to give the documentarians up to 250 cartridges and plan to sell the rest that are unearthed.

Mayor Susie Galea hopes this brings more tourists to this southeastern New Mexico town that is home to an Air Force base and White Sands National Monument.

"Lots of people just pass through, unfortunately," she said.

The "E.T." game is among the factors blamed for the decline of Atari and the collapse in the U.S. of a multi-million-dollar video game industry that didn’t bounce back for several years.

With the whether-or-not E.T. was buried in Alamogordo controversy solved,

the other, subtler debate remains. Was it the worst game ever unleashed on gamers?

Tina Amini, deputy editor at gaming website Kotaku, says the game tanked because "it was practically broken" with that the E.T. falling into traps that were almost impossible to escape and would appear constantly and unpredictably.

The game designer, Howard Scott Warshaw, says he does not mind his creation being called that. "It may be a horrible game, but 32 years after, you are here, talking to me about it. It’s a tremendous honor," that it still generates public discourse.

He, however, manages to stress that the company took too long to secure the rights for the game and with Christmas production schedules pressing he was left with just five weeks to design, write and test "the worst game ever."

Former Atari Employee Talks About Buried Games

A story about Atari games buried in a New Mexico dump has become the stuff of legend and one Idaho man says he can solve the mystery.

"The urban legend was that Atari had gone out in the middle of the desert and buried somewhere between 3-and-a-half and 5 million ET cartridges," Heller said.

James Heller of Nampa worked for Atari back in 1983. He was told to get rid of some 750,000 video games that were in a warehouse in El Paso, TX.

"I had been charged with getting rid of it as quickly and inexpensively as possible and so I did," Heller said. "That was my job."

That’s when the rumors started.

"There was many, many things written that it was done in the middle of the night," Heller said. "It was not. That Atari was trying to hide something, they were not. It was just my job."

He says after kids raided the dump, six truckloads of cement were used to cover the games. Then, thirty years later, back in June of last year, the games surfaced in a story about the Atari gravesite.

"I looked at the article and I go, ’I did that!’" Heller said.

A film crew shooting a documentary about Atari showed up last Saturday to find what was buried. They invited Heller to be there. He says they found the whole lot.

"It was just not ET," Heller said. "It was like Missile Command, and Centipede, Warlords."

Heller said the games were in good shape. He says all the hype about Atari hiding the games is just a story.

"It was excess inventory that they couldn’t sell and they had to get rid of it," Heller said.

He says no Roswell, no conspiracy and no mystery.

"No mystery whatsoever, just people made it a mystery," Heller said. And James Heller knows all about it.

"It’s the biggest urban legend that ever happened in video gaming history. It’s lasted for thirty years."

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

The FCC Appears To Be Letting Net Neutrality Die. Here s Why That Matters

This illustrates the worst-case scenario of the proposal the FCC began sketching out last week: In rewriting net neutrality rules that were punctured by a court ruling in January, it would allow commercially reasonable paid prioritization deals. In other words, rich companies could fork over money to Internet providers to ensure that their high-bandwidth traffic like video would arrive at high speed. Others? Maybe not.

Early reaction has been none too kind. Think headlines like The FCC doesn t want to destroy net neutrality, but it s going to anyway which ran atop one of the less pessimistic stories, a nuanced explanation by Stacey Higginbotham on GigaOM.

Under this new regime, the warning goes, while big-name companies would pay for elite status to lock in their privileged positions, smaller competitors would be left apologizing for their lagging performance, while startups would starve for funding as investors get spooked.

And executives at Big Telecom will mutter Excellent! as they spend their bonuses, secure in the knowledge that they face little effective competition.

It s a real risk. And I was reminded of it in very real terms when Netflix paused and rebuffered repeatedly over the weekend, even though my Verizon FiOS connection delivers more than enough bandwidth for an HD stream. Then on Monday, Netflix announced that it had agreed to a form of paid prioritization with Verizon.

What we don t know?But this worst-case interpretation deserves closer inspection, because there are some facts that we don t yet know.

The biggest unknown in the doomsday forecasts is the experience that would befall sites and services that don t pay for an upgrade. If the FCC leaves that up to Internet providers, then we really are on the way to stratified Internet.

But as Higginbotham s post notes, the commission is considering requiring a minimum level of service in addition to banning providers from blocking sites. If that floor is high enough at an optimistic extreme, to ensure reliable streaming HD video then paid prioritization might come into play only for extravagances like Netflix s venture into 4K Ultra High Definition. Or maybe faster lanes wouldn t be economically viable.

A lower or vaguer baseline, however, would give startups and their potential funders the heebie-jeebies over what they might have to pay to unavoidable, under-accountable Internet providers.

 This is a very bad idea, wrote John Backus, managing partner of New Atlantic Ventures. It is a huge boondoggle for anyone that owns pipes because they can basically auction off delivery times/speeds.

A second unknown is the FCC making Internet providers disclose the principles governing their plumbing. If these transparency requirements expose details like peering and interconnection deals, it would be more obvious who s to blame for these holdups.

 Aside from outright blocking, it s extremely difficult to establish when a broadband provider is engaging in any sort of throttling or prioritization of traffic, wrote Jackdaw Research analyst Jan Dawson. He noted that s especially tricky in wireless networks which have been under exceptionally permissive net-neutrality rules since 2010.

As FCC chair Tom Wheeler related at the State of the Net conference in Washington this January, Netflix didn t work reliably in his own home, and his wife wanted answers: You re chairman of the FCC, why is this happening?

The third unknown is what else the FCC could do to boost competition among broadband providers, which could lower any one company s ability to demand a paid-prioritization tax from a content site. Without that, there s little that customers will be able to do except complain.

The FCC can t make cable operators invade one another s territory for competitive purposes. But it could challenge state bans on municipal broadband, contest local regulations that impede building telecom infrastructure, and free up unlicensed spectrum for broadband use.

It could also kick Comcast s proposal to buy Time Warner Cable to the curb. Or (cue the cries of Socialism!) it could accept the deal on the condition that the combined company agree to resell capacity to other firms, much as wireless carriers already do.

And it s worth noting that while players in the more competitive wireless market have more liberty to discriminate for or against sites, they haven t rushed to cash in on that privilege.

AT&T backed down on its attempt to reserve FaceTime video calling to customers on more expensive plans; its more recent sponsored data venture, a rough equivalent of letting advertisers pay for toll-free calls, is far more modest.

Why we should be wary?A move toward letting Internet providers charge for data coming and going represents a fundamental change in how the market of data transmission works today. It also feels like a victory for blowhards like former AT&T CEO Ed Whitacre in 2005, he told BusinessWeek that dot-coms would like to use my pipes free, but I ain t

going to let them do that even if it falls short of that greedy dream.

Over the past dozen years, the FCC has often appeared to be losing a negotiation with itself. In 2002 it let cable Internet out of common carrier requirements that mandated net neutrality and instead labeled it an information service along the lines of an e-mail service; then in 2005 it gave phone-based broadband the same help; then its attempt to reconstitute net-neutrality rules got nuked in court; then this January a second try got shot down again.

The FCC now seems to feel that the philosophically simpler fix of undoing those changes and reclassifying broadband as a common-carrier service one that moves bits from Point A to Point B without discriminating by content or source (which I suspect is how most of you see your ISP) would take too long to get through court challenges. So it s left with this workaround, hacked together to erect some protections for customers on the limited legal framework left by January s court ruling.

And the guy leading this charge, Wheeler, happens to have led both the cable and wireless trade associations at earlier points in his career. He can t possibly be surprised at the skeptical hearing he s getting. And he d best get to the specifics of his plan soon so we can debate them intelligently.

Proposed Rules Far from Gutting Net Neutrality, FCC Tells Critics

The U.S. communications regulator on Thursday sought to tame an outcry over its plan to allow fast lanes for some content on the Internet, insisting that the agency will monitor and punish broadband providers that treat Web traffic unreasonably.

The Federal Communications Commission is weighing rules that would ban Internet providers from blocking access to websites or applications, but would allow content companies to pay for faster Internet speeds delivering their traffic as long as such deals are deemed commercially reasonable.

Consumer advocates assailed the proposal from FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler, saying it would let certain content providers pay for access to fast lanes and discourage consumers from going to competitors sites where videos or other content may load more slowly by comparison.

The five-member FCC will negotiate the rules before it votes on May 15 to formally propose them and seek public comment.

This move is likely to favor the companies with the deepest pockets and hurt the scrappy startups, Delara Derakhshani, policy counsel for Consumers Union, said in a statement.

The debate is over the principle known as open Internet or net neutrality, which establishes that owners of networks that deliver online content should treat all of that content equally.

There are reports that the FCC is gutting the Open Internet rule. They are flat-out wrong, Wheeler said in a statement late Wednesday. In a blog post Thursday, he said the rules, which he intends to finalize by year-end, would not harm consumers or change the FCC s underlying goals

of transparency.

The FCC for years has struggled to set rules that would prohibit Internet providers from restricting how consumers surf the Web but would also withstand legal challenges from broadband providers who have said they, as owners of the networks, should be able to manage them or charge for their use without what they see as regulatory overreach.

In January, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit for the second time struck down the FCC s previous anti-discrimination and anti-blocking rules after a challenge from Verizon Communications. But the judges did affirm the agency s authority to regulate broadband, giving the FCC new legal opportunity to rewrite the rules.

It was the court s direction that guided Wheeler s proposal to allow commercially reasonable preferential treatment of traffic, senior FCC officials said Thursday.

The agency will seek public comment before determining how to define commercially unreasonable behavior or a violation of net neutrality, but it will focus on whether broadband companies treatment of traffic hurts competitors or consumers, hurts free speech or is done in good faith, the officials said.

The FCC would have the authority to go after companies that violate the commercially reasonable standard on a case-by-case basis. The review would be prompted by formal or informal complaints, as well as the FCC s own monitoring of how broadband providers treat online traffic, the officials said.

One of the ideas the FCC is considering would be to have a commission ombudsperson to monitor the industry with consumers and content providers in mind, one FCC official said.

In striking down the FCC s old rules, the court said the agency had improperly treated Internet service providers as regulated public utilities providing telecommunications services, like telephone companies, while they were actually classified as information service providers.

Consumer advocates have called on the FCC to reclassify Internet providers as more heavily regulated telecommunications services, an idea that has faced tremendous pushback from the broadband industry and Republican lawmakers who have urged the FCC to tread lightly.

Virtually all large Internet providers, such as Verizon, AT&T, and Time Warner Cable, pledged after January s ruling to continue abiding by the principles of open Internet and have not weighed in since then.

The fees that content providers pay for faster access to their sites or applications recently grabbed the spotlight after video streaming service Netflix struck a deal known as an interconnection agreement with cable provider Comcast in February.

However, such deals are struck on the back end of the network that gets content from a server to the broadband network and so are outside of the scope of the FCC s net neutrality rules. The rules have applied only to deals related to traffic going over the last mile of broadband networks, where content moves directly to the consumer.

AOL Urges Password Change for Tens of Millions of Members

AOL Inc on Monday urged its tens of millions of email account holders to change their passwords and security questions after a cyber attack compromised about 2 percent of its accounts.

The company said it was working with federal authorities to investigate the attack, in which hackers obtained email addresses, postal addresses, encrypted passwords and answers to security questions used to reset passwords.

It said there was no indication that the encryption on that data had been broken.

A company spokesman declined to say how many email accounts are registered on its system.

AOL said that it identified the breach after noticing a significant increase in the amount of spam appearing as spoofed emails from AOL addresses. Such emails do not originate from a sender s service provider, but their addresses are edited to make them appear that way.

U.S. Government Suggests That You Switch from Internet Explorer

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security advised computer users to consider using alternatives to Microsoft Corp s Internet Explorer browser until the company fixes a security flaw that hackers have used to launch attacks.

The United States Computer Emergence Readiness Team said in an advisory released on Monday morning that the vulnerability in versions 6 to 11 of Internet Explorer could lead to the complete compromise of an affected system.

Microsoft is rushing to fix a bug in its widely used Internet Explorer Web browser after a computer security firm disclosed a flaw over the weekend, saying hackers have already exploited it in attacks on some U.S. companies.

PCs running Windows XP will not receive any updates fixing that bug when they are released, however, because Microsoft stopped supporting the 13-year-old operating system earlier this month. Security firms estimate that between 15 and 25 percent of the world s PCs still run Windows XP.

Microsoft disclosed on Saturday its plans to fix the bug in an advisory to its customers posted on its security website, which it said is present in Internet Explorer versions 6 to 11. Those versions dominate desktop browsing, accounting for 55 percent of the PC browser market, according to tech research firm NetMarketShare.

Cybersecurity software maker FireEye said that a sophisticated group of hackers have been exploiting the bug in a campaign dubbed Operation Clandestine Fox.

FireEye, whose Mandiant division helps companies respond to cyber attacks, declined to name specific victims or to identify the group of hackers, saying that an investigation into the matter is still active.

It s a campaign of targeted attacks seemingly against U.S.-based firms, currently tied to defense and financial sectors, FireEye spokesman Vitor De Souza said via email. It s unclear what the motives of this attack group are, at this point. It appears to be broad-spectrum intel gathering.

He declined to elaborate, though he said one way to protect against them would be to switch to another browser.

Microsoft said in the advisory that the vulnerability could allow a hacker to take complete control of an affected system, and then do things such as viewing, changing, or deleting data; installing malicious programs; or creating accounts that would give hackers full user rights.

FireEye and Microsoft have not provided much information about the security flaw or the approach that hackers could use to figure out how to exploit it, said Aviv Raff, chief technology officer of cybersecurity firm Seculert.

Yet other groups of hackers are now racing to learn more about it so they can launch similar attacks before Microsoft prepares a security update, Raff said.
Microsoft should move fast, he said. This will snowball.

Still, he cautioned that Windows XP users will not benefit from that update since Microsoft has just halted support for that product.

The software maker said in a statement to Reuters that it advises Windows XP owners to upgrade to one of two most recently versions of its operating system, Windows 7 or 8.

What You Need To Know About Internet Explorer Fix

Microsoft will deliver a patch to fix an Internet Explorer security flaw that left users of the browser vulnerable to attacks that were so worrisome it prompted federal officials earlier this week to issue a warning.

Microsoft said they will deliver the patch for all versions of Internet Explorer and also release a patch for users of the Windows XP operating system, despite discontinuing technical assistance and updates for the 12-year-old operating system last month.

If users have automatic updates turned on, there will be no need to take any action to get the patch.

Microsoft also encouraged any holdout users of XP to consider upgrading their operating system.

"The threat landscape has changed, and attackers have become more sophisticated. Modern operating systems like Windows 7 and 8.1 have more safety and security features than older operating systems, like Windows

XP," a company blog post said.

The glitch, which was announced less than a week ago, works by tricking users into visiting a malicious website that then quietly installs malware, turning control of the system over to hackers, according to a Microsoft security advisory released Sunday.

Internet Explorer is the top desktop browser, accounting for nearly 58 percent of users last month, according to NetMarketShare.

How To Switch from Internet Explorer and Bring Your Bookmarks with You

A newly discovered Internet Explorer security bug has left Web security in jeopardy. Though Microsoft has agreed to soon release a patch unless you re one of the poor souls still on Windows XP you re probably going to want to consider switching to another Web browser in the meantime.

That isn t just our advice: Even the federal government has suggested changing Web browsers until Microsoft fixes Internet Explorer.

Lucky for you, there are a few good alternatives to Microsoft s built-in browser, including Opera, Google Chrome, and Mozilla Firefox. Chrome and Firefox are the two most popular alternatives. Each of these browsers will let you import your old browser history and bookmarks, too, so you don t have to start from scratch after switching.

Note: The following instructions will be for Windows 8 computers, but installing on Windows XP, Windows Vista, and Windows 7 should be nearly the same steps.

Switching to Chrome?First you ll have to visit the Chrome.com website from your current browser.

Click the Download now button, and then follow the onscreen instructions.

Chrome will ask you to make it your default browser. This will make it so that Chrome, not Internet Explorer, will pop up when you click Web address links in emails and other programs. To do this, click Next at the prompt, and then select Google Chrome from the Windows settings pop-up.

Chrome will then launch for the first time and ask that you sign in with your Google/Gmail account. You can skip this, if you want. Logging in allows Google to automatically sync Android and Chrome desktop browsing history and bookmarks between devices. That means if you use Chrome on another computer, and sign in to the browser, then all your bookmarks and preferences will appear there, too.

Lastly, to import your computer s Internet Explorer bookmarks and browsing history, just click the settings button in the upper-right corner of your Chrome browser. Mouse over to Bookmarks and click Import bookmarks and settings.

The pop-up window will ask what you d like to import. Check everything you d like, and click Import.

And that s it.

Switching to Firefox?Visit Firefox.com to download Mozilla s browser.

Click the Free Download button and then run the installation file by clicking Run in the pop-up that appears at the bottom of your Internet Explorer browser window.

The setup application will open. Click Install to continue, and when you get to the Import Wizard pop-up, be sure to select the button beside the Microsoft Internet Explorer and click the Next button to bring in your computer s IE history and bookmarks. In the following window, you can also elect to Import your home page from Internet Explorer by selecting that bubble and clicking Next there.

After you re finished with these steps, Firefox should open, and you ll be asked to make it your default browser. Again, this will prevent Internet Explorer from opening when you click Web links from your email or other applications.

Check the Always perform this check when starting Firefox box to ensure that Internet Explorer doesn t default back to your main browser, and then click Yes. In the Windows settings pop-up that will appear, click Firefox.

And you re done!

Congratulations. You re fully set up with a non-Internet Explorer Web browser.

Now you can browse safely until Microsoft announces a fix for that nasty security bug. Though who knows; once you go not-Internet Explorer, you may never go back.

Google To Stop Mining Student Emails for Ad Ideas

Google will stop looking for advertising ideas in the emails of students using a suite of the Internet company’s free products tailored for schools.

The changes announced Wednesday affect Google’s "Apps for Education" service that has been offered to schools for the past seven years.

Among other things, Google Inc. says it will no longer pore through Gmails sent through Apps for Education for clues about students’ interests. The scanning helps the Mountain View, Calif., company figure out what types of ads might appeal to the students.

Although Google didn’t show ads in Apps for Education unless school administrators choose to allow the commercial pitches, the company could still use the personal data collected in Gmail scanning to peddle products when students might be using other online services.

More than 30 million students, teachers and administrators use the Apps for Education suite.

"Earning and keeping their trust drives our business forward," Bram Bout, Google’s director of education wrote in a blog post. "We know that trust

is earned through protecting their privacy and providing the best security measures."

Google's habitual scanning of Gmail had become the focal point of a federal lawsuit alleging the practice violated users' privacy. The case included claims by students at the University of Hawaii and the University of the Pacific in Stockton, Calif. that they were required to use Apps for Education as part of their enrollment in schools.

U.S. District Judge Lucy Koh dealt the lawsuit a setback last month when she denied a request to certify it as a class action representing tens of millions of Gmail users.

Google's scanning of Gmail in schools also had been facing questions about whether it violated the 40-year-old Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which is meant to protect student privacy.

Bout's blog post didn't cite the legal issues facing Gmail-scanning in his blog post outlining the revisions to Google's Apps for Education policies.

"Google executives are always pushing the limits and only back off when their hands are caught in the cookie jar," said John Simpson, privacy project director for Consumer Watchdog, a group that has railed against Google's data-collection practices for years.

Google is also removing the option that allowed school administrators to show Gmail ads when students were using Apps for Education.

Apple, Facebook, and Other Tech Companies Will Disclose More About Government Data Requests

Apple, Facebook, Microsoft, and Google will tell their users more about government requests for their data, in the wake of a series of leaks exposing the NSA's secret bulk data collection programs. As the Washington Post reports, companies that have already adopted a practice of notifying users of government requests "have found that investigators often drop data demands to avoid having suspects learn of inquiries."

Here's more from the Post:

Apple, Microsoft, Facebook and Google all are updating their policies to expand routine notification of users about government data seizures, unless specifically gagged by a judge or other legal authority, officials at all four companies said. Yahoo announced similar changes in July.

But that doesn't mean that every government request for data will become public knowledge. Orders making their way through the FISA Courts which grants the authority for the NSA's data queries are automatically secret. And as the Post notes, so are the FBI-issued national security letters. In the end, all four companies confirming the changes to the Post say they'll end up disclosing information on requests with more frequency, and will have clearer policies on when those requests are withheld from the public, and why.

Justice Department spokesman Peter Carr responded to the Post's story with a statement, claiming that the move will endanger their investigations:

"These risks of endangering life, risking destruction of evidence, or allowing suspects to flee or intimidate witnesses are not merely hypothetical, but unfortunately routine.

If you want to know which other tech companies already disclose data requests to their users, you can check out the Electronic Frontier Foundation’s "Who Has Your Back?" resource.

Watch Out, Yahoo! EFF Looses BADGER on Sites That Ignore Do Not Track

In the wake of Yahoo!’s decision to stop honoring browsers’ Do Not Track signals, the Electronic Frontier Foundation has released a new blacklisting tool that will automatically block tracking cookies from sites that refuse to support DNT.

Dubbed Privacy Badger, the tool is available as a browser plugin for Chrome and Firefox that keeps track of any third-party cookies, images, or scripts it finds embedded in the web pages you visit.

If these elements appear to be using unique identifiers to track you across multiple sites, Privacy Badger automatically blocks content from the site they came from unless, the EFF says, the site has made a "strong commitment" to support DNT.

Yahoo! and other DNT dissenters have dropped support for the scheme because they claim they don’t know what the DNT signal is supposed to mean, and that there’s no "single standard" for how sites should handle it.

The EFF would like to negate that argument, and to that end it has opened discussion on a draft standard DNT compliance policy that companies could eventually use as a model for their own policies.

The document is listed as version 0.1 for now, and at more than 1,300 words long, it’s not a quick read. But the EFF has given online companies an incentive to pay attention to it, even at this early stage: post a copy of the policy to your site at a specific URL where Privacy Badger can find it, and the plugin will unblock content from your domain (as long as you aren’t sending tracking elements to browsers with DNT enabled).

"So users who install Privacy Badger not only get more privacy and a better browsing experience for themselves, but actually contribute to making the Web as a whole better for everyone," the EFF explained in a blog post.

The current version of Privacy Badger looks only for cookies and other tracking elements that are sent by third-party sites, but the EFF says that future versions will also examine tracking items sent by sites you actually visit.

"We are doing things in this order because the most scandalous, intrusive and objectionable form of online tracking is that conducted by companies you’ve often never heard of and have no relationship with," the plugin’s FAQ explains meaning the myriad networks that serve ads to and harvest data from websites.

You can download Privacy Badger from its homepage today, and if you're interested in contributing to the code, you can find the repositories on Github somewhat ironically, because as Privacy Badger reveals, Github does not honor DNT.

Google Just Got Hit With A Major Class Action Lawsuit

Hagens Berman, a consumer rights law firm, has filed a class-action lawsuit against Google, claiming "the search engine giant illegally monopolized, and financially and creatively stagnated the American market of internet and mobile search." Do they have a case?

The lawsuit accuses Google of creating secret "Mobile Application Distribution Agreements." Berman believes these agreements were hidden from the public, only available for view to the legal team, and that the secret agreements are key to the monopoly: "Google s monopoly of these markets stems from the company s purchasing of Android mobile operating system to maintain and expand its monopoly by pre-loading its own suite of applications onto the devices by way of secret [agreements]." Berman goes on to state that Google's role in making their own apps preloaded (such as Google Play and YouTube) hurt the market, artificially inflating prices for competitors Samsung and HTC.

Steven Berman, founding partner at Hagens Berman and the representative attorney, said, It s clear that Google has not achieved this monopoly through offering a better search engine, but through its strategic, anti-competitive placement [...] Simply put, there is no lawful, pro-competitive reason for Google to condition licenses to pre-load popular Google apps like this.

That argument sounds not unlike the the arguments used against Microsoft in the late 1990s, when they faced years of lawsuits over claims they illegally bundled Internet Explorer with the Windows operating system; although the circumstances and the stakes are quite different this time around.

The class is seeking a major pay out: It asks for damages for anyone who purchased the devices affected by the alleged Google monopoly which would be basically all Android devices since Google bought Android in 2005.

A lawsuit of this size is incredibly ambitious. First, Berman must have their class certified, meaning they must prove that everyone they are seeking damages for has similar enough cases to be considered a cohesive unit. In the event they do prove this, Google can also file a motion to dismiss. Google certainly has the funds to fight a lawsuit like this.

They will likely be in the dismissal process (and if necessary, an appeal process to that) for years before this case ever sees a jury. There is also the possibility of settlement, if a dismissal is not approved.

However, given Google's power and size (and quite frankly, ego), they may prefer to fight the case and lose rather than settle.

In a statement to Reuters, Google said: "Anyone can use Android without Google and anyone can use Google without Android. Since Android's

introduction, greater competition in smartphones has given consumers more choices at lower prices."

This price competition may also be a key factor in the case. Google can try to make the size of the class smaller by arguing that Android prices were different based on mobile carrier, promotional offers, and the model of the device.

Regardless of the tactic used to fight the case, it'll be a long time before we see a resolution. On average, it takes about a year from the filing of a notice of appeal to get to the final deposition for all federal cases. Class action and antitrust suits take even longer, and this case is both. And years in the legal world are like decades in fast-developing tech world. By the time, this gets sorted out, the mobile market may have changed so much, we could all be using Windows phones.

New, Revamped Firefox Looks and Acts More Like Google Chrome

With version 29 of its Firefox browser, Mozilla debuts the Australis interface and a new Accounts function, allowing users to synchronize data and settings across multiple devices. All in all, the updates place Firefox more in line with Google Chrome, which is currently the world s most popular browser.

Australis is characterized by its redesigned tabs, which have rounder corners and are brought forward when open, and by an intuitive and customizable menu. Located in the upper-right corner, the menu offers quick access to the browser s features, settings, and functions (add-ons, history, developer, full-screen mode, and so on). On opening the new Firefox for the first time, users will find a short guide to the changes.

The updated Firefox interface is unmistakably similar to that of Google s Chrome. And, like Chrome fans, Firefox fans can now create an account and sync their bookmarks, passwords, and settings in order to access them from any device.

To download the latest version of Mozilla Firefox for Windows, Mac, and Linux, you can run an update on your current version or download the latest version directly from Mozilla s server here.

The New MacBook Air: Apple Unveils New Air, Lowers Price

The Air just got a little refresher.

On Tuesday morning, Apple announced a new version of its MacBook Air, its slim, lightweight, oft-imitated laptop computer. The new MacBook Air looks the same as last year s model, but Apple has upgraded the computer s processor, making it speedier at things like multitasking, and also taken $100 off the starting price.

The design, weight, and screen sizes and quality remain the same. What Apple has improved here are the guts of the computer, improving its zip

and likely its battery life, too. Last year s MacBook Airs, which launched in June, started with Intel dual-core 1.3 GHz processors; this year s MacBook Airs will come with newer Intel dual-core 1.4 GHz processors.

That means better speed. The cheapest MacBook Air configuration, for a laptop with an 11-inch display, costs $899, down from $999 a year ago. A new MacBook Air with a 13-inch display starts at $999, also down $100 from a year ago.

Though Apple s super-skinny laptop was one of a kind when it debuted in 2008, similarly lightweight, slim models from Windows manufacturers like Samsung and Asus have been challenging the Air as of late. Many of these models are cheaper than the Air and offer similar processing power and lightness. But none of those myriad Windows ultrabooks, as they are called, has caught on like the Air has.

For the gear-heads, tech specs are available at Apple s website. The new MacBook Air is available now on Apple.com and in Apple Stores.

When BASIC Was Young: Great Memories

The programming language BASIC will be 50 years old in May. Though much has changed it’s still alive and well in the form of Microsoft Visual Basic, presently the sixth most popular programming language, according to the TIOBE index for April 2014.

Although there are many modern programming languages better suited to today’s technology - Python and Lua are personal favorites - BASIC still matters to many who write code. And it matters as an example of openness.

BASIC was developed by John G. Kemeny (1926-1993) and Thomas E. Kurtz (1928-), who described it as an effort "to give students a simple programming language that was easy-to-learn."

That goal of accessibility becomes ever more important as our devices and networks become more complicated. Without accessibility, we risk denying people the opportunity to create the technological systems that shape social, political, and economic interaction. BASIC invited everyone to tinker with machines that were previously tended by a mainframe priesthood. Its birth hastened the personal computing reformation.

BASIC debuted at 4 a.m. on May 1, 1964, when two BASIC programs ran at the same time on the General Electric 225 mainframe housed at Dartmouth College. Since then, it has given rise to many different versions and has played a vital role in computer education.

BASIC gave rise to Microsoft. The company’s first product, Altair BASIC, written by Bill Gates and Paul Allen, was an interpreter for BASIC that ran on the MITS Altair 8800.

Kemeny and Kurtz’s creation of BASIC not only made programming fun, it made the case for computer literacy as part of every educated person’s life, said Michael T. Jones, chief technology advocate at Google, in an email. "They made that true at Dartmouth 50 years ago and it is true today the world over."? ?We have much to thank them for, said Jones. You could even say they started the open-source software movement. "By

making the BASIC environment so friendly, they created a safe place for people to play and explore. The computer game movement came from BASIC. People shared games, long before there were networks, by printing the BASIC programs in Creative Computing and BYTE magazines for others to enter in and enjoy. Today we call it open source software but the origins date back fifty years."? ?"Many Google engineers have told me that their first introduction to computing was in BASIC, that BASIC is how they first saw the beauty and magic of programming," Jones continued. "No doubt this is true at other leading technology companies all around the world. This is the ultimate legacy of professors John Kemeny and Thomas Kurtz -- a world where the computer is a pleasant and helpful part of everyday life for billions of people."

A simpler time?For me, BASIC recalls a simpler time, when Apple was more open than it is now. I began learning BASIC in 1982 on an Apple II+, back when I was in high school. The following year, my friend Alec and I were deputized to teach BASIC under the supervision of our physics instructor, George Lang, to a handful of interested peers in a short-lived elective class.

Alec was the superior programmer (he knew Assembly Language) but BASIC was never intended for experts. The name stands for Beginner’s All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Code. The language is so simple that anyone can pick it up with a bit of effort.

I never accomplished anything noteworthy with BASIC. Probably the biggest project I undertook was to write an application to assist the playing of Avalon Hill’s Squad Leader, a favorite board game of mine at the time. But playing around with BASIC gave me an understanding of programming and technology that has informed my career over the years since.

Alec and I, faced with the desire to apply to college in a way that distinguished us from other applicants, turned our knowledge of BASIC into a school computer magazine that we called Interpreter. With the help of other friends who recognized the transcript-padding potential of involvement in our publishing venture, we turned out our first issue in June 1983. That was more or less the point I decided to focus on writing for people rather than machines.

We made our magazine before the era of desktop publishing. Imagine using X-Acto knives for layout. We ran a full-page ad from Beagle Bros., a maker of Apple II software that we admired, as a courtesy and to fill a blank page. The ad said, "All Beagle Bros. disks are Unlocked, Copyable, and Compatible with Apple* II, II+, and IIe. Don’t settle for less."

BASIC was open in a similar way, designed to be operating system independent and hardware independent. Kemeny and Kurtz didn’t patent it or protect it; they gave it away for free. That’s worth remembering.

Previously Unknown Warhol Works Discovered on Floppy Disks from 1985

A multi-institutional team of new-media artists, computer experts, and museum professionals have discovered a dozen previously unknown experiments by Andy Warhol (BFA, 1949) on aging floppy disks from 1985.

The purely digital images, trapped for nearly 30 years on Amiga floppy disks stored in the archives collection of The Andy Warhol Museum (AWM),

were discovered and extracted by members of the Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) Computer Club, with assistance from the AWM s staff, CMU s Frank-Ratchye STUDIO for Creative Inquiry (FRSCI), the Hillman Photography Initiative at the Carnegie Museum of Art (CMOA), and New York based artist Cory Arcangel.

Warhol s Amiga experiments were the products of a commission by Commodore International to demonstrate the graphic arts capabilities of the Amiga 1000 personal computer. Created by Warhol on prototype Amiga hardware in his unmistakable visual style, the recovered images reveal an early exploration of the visual potential of software imaging tools, and show new ways in which the preeminent American artist of the 20th century was years ahead of his time.

The impetus for the investigation came when Arcangel, a self-described Warhol fanatic and lifelong computer nerd, learned about Warhol s Amiga experiments from the YouTube video of the 1985 Commodore Amiga product launch. Acting on a hunch, and with the support of CMOA curator Tina Kukielski, Arcangel approached the AWM in December 2011 regarding the possibility of restoring the Amiga hardware in the museum s possession, and cataloging any files on its associated diskettes. In April 2012, he contacted Golan Levin, a CMU art professor and director of the FRSCI, a laboratory that supports atypical, anti-disciplinary and inter-institutional arts research. Offering a grant to support the investigation, Levin connected Cory with the CMU Computer Club, a student organization that had gained renown for its expertise in retrocomputing, or the restoration of vintage computers.

CMU Computer Club members determined that even reading the data from the diskettes entailed significant risk to the contents, and would require unusual tools and methodologies. By February 2013, in collaboration with collections manager Amber Morgan and other AWM personnel, the Club had completed a plan for handling the delicate disk media, and gathered at The Andy Warhol Museum to see if any data could be extracted. The Computer Club set up a cart of exotic gear, while a video crew from the Hillman Photography Initiative, under the direction of Kukielski, followed their progress.

It was not known in advance whether any of Warhol s imagery existed on the floppy disks nearly all of which were system and application diskettes onto which, the team later discovered, Warhol had saved his own data. Reviewing the disks directory listings, the team s initial excitement on seeing promising filenames like campbells.pic and marilyn1.pic quickly turned to dismay, when it emerged that the files were stored in a completely unknown file format, unrecognized by any utility. Soon afterwards, however, the Club s forensics experts had reverse-engineered the unfamiliar format, unveiling 28 never-before-seen digital images that were judged to be in Warhol s style by the AWM s experts. At least eleven of these images featured Warhol s signature.

The images depict some of Warhol s best-known subjects Campbell s soup cans, Botticelli s Venus, and self-portraiture, for example articulated through uniquely digital processes such as pattern flood fills, palletized color, and copy-paste collage. What s amazing is that by looking at these images, we can see how quickly Warhol seemed to intuit the essence of what it meant to express oneself, in what then was a brand-new medium: the digital, says Arcangel.

The team s efforts are documented in the Hillman Photography Initiative s new short film, Trapped: Andy Warhol s Amiga Experiments.

Trapped will premiere at 7 p.m., Saturday, May 10, at Carnegie Library Lecture Hall in Pittsburgh. The screening will be followed by a conversation with some of the team s key players, including artists Arcangel and Levin; Michael Dille, who just completed his Ph.D. in robotics at CMU, and Keith A. Bare of the CMU Computer Club; and outside guest Jon Ippolito, a professor of digital media curation at the University of Maine.

The Trapped documentary will be available online at http://nowseethis.org on May 12.

A detailed report about the CMU Computer Club s retrocomputing work on the Warhol/Amiga image recovery project can be found: http://studioforcreativeinquiry.org/public/warhol_amiga_report_v10.pdf

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